

CLAIMS

We claim:

1 1. A computer implemented method of delivering media items to a plurality of
2 users, the method comprising:

3 delivering to the users via a computer network media items in a sequential order

4 from a playlist, the playlist defining a plurality of media items to be

5 delivered and the sequential order for their delivery;

6 receiving a requests for a media item from one or more of the users; and

7 selectively adding the requested media item to the playlist if the modified playlist

8 would satisfy a set of restrictive criteria.

9 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the set of restrictive criteria comprises
10 whether the playlist satisfies a set of group preferences.

11 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the adding comprises inserting a requested
12 media item at a random position in the playlist.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the adding comprises:
2 attempting to add the requested media item to a position in the playlist so that the
3 modified playlist satisfies the set of restrictive criteria; and
4 disregarding the request if the requested media item cannot be added to the
5 playlist so that the modified playlist would satisfy the set of restrictive
6 criteria.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the set of restrictive criteria comprises
2 whether the playlist complies with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act requirement for
3 obtaining a statutory license.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the delivering media items comprises
2 broadcasting media items to the users so that fewer than a substantial number of media items
3 are delivered within an hour of when their corresponding request was received.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the delivering media items further comprises
2 broadcasting media items to the users so that fewer than a substantial number of media items
3 are delivered at a time that the user who made the request is informed the requested media
4 item will be delivered.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the delivering media items comprises
2 broadcasting media items to the users so that the media items are delivered in compliance
3 with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act requirement for obtaining a statutory license.

1 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing a searchable database of media items that allows a user to search the
3 database by a set of media item attributes;
4 receiving a request from the user for a media item from the database; and
5 selectively adding the requested media item from the database to the playlist if the
6 modified playlist would satisfy the set of restrictive criteria.

1 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the adding comprises limiting the number of
2 requests from a user.

1 11. The method of claim 1, wherein the media items are sound recordings.

1 12. A computer implemented method of interactively delivering media over a
2 computer network from a media server to a plurality of clients, the method comprising:
3 generating a playlist that defines a plurality of media files in an order, the playlist
4 satisfying a set of restrictive criteria;
5 sequentially transmitting the media files as defined by the playlist over the
6 computer network to the clients;
7 receiving a request for a media file from a client; and
8 scheduling the requested media file into the playlist if the updated playlist would
9 satisfy the restrictive criteria, whereby the media files are transmitted to
10 the clients according to the updated playlist.

1 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the set of restrictive criteria comprises
2 whether the playlist satisfies a set of group preferences.

1 14. The method of claim 12, wherein the scheduling comprises adding requested
2 media files into the playlist so that fewer than a substantial number of media files will be
3 transmitted within an hour of receiving the corresponding request, or at a time that a client is
4 informed that the requested media file will be transmitted.

1 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the scheduling comprises adding requested
2 media files into the playlist so that at least one media file will be transmitted within an hour
3 of receiving the corresponding request.

1 16. The method of claim 12, wherein the media files represent sound recordings.

1 17. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

2 providing a searchable database of media files, wherein a client can search the
3 database according to a set of media file attributes and request a specific
4 media file therefrom; and
5 scheduling the requested specific media file into the playlist if the updated playlist
6 would satisfy the set of restrictive criteria.

1 18. The method of claim 12, wherein the media server comprises a computer
2 system having a memory, the method further comprising:
3 maintaining the playlist in the memory of the media server.

1 19. A computer implemented method of delivering media over a computer
2 network to multiple users comprising:
3 broadcasting streaming media on a channel according to a broadcasting schedule,
4 wherein multiple users can access the channel and the media broadcasted
5 thereon;
6 receiving a plurality of requests for media from one or more users; and

7 incorporating the requested media into the streaming media if doing so would
8 satisfy a set of restrictive criteria.

1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the broadcasting comprises delivering fewer
2 than a substantial number of requested media within an hour of receiving the corresponding
3 request, or at a time that the requesting user is informed that the requested media will be
4 broadcast.

1 21. The method of claim 19, wherein streaming media is streaming audio.

1 22. A computer implemented method of delivering media over a computer
2 network from a media provider to multiple users, the method comprising:
3 broadcasting a specific program of media on each of a plurality of channels,
4 wherein multiple users can access each channel and thereby receive the
5 program broadcasted thereon;
6 receiving from a user a request for media corresponding to one of the channels;
7 and
8 incorporating the requested media into the corresponding channel's program if the
9 modified program would satisfy a set of restrictive criteria, the restrictive
10 criteria including a set of channel preferences unique between at least two
11 channels.

1 23. The method of claim 22, wherein the incorporating comprises adding the
2 requested media into the corresponding channel's program so that fewer than a substantial

number of media will be broadcasted within an hour of receiving the corresponding request,
or at a time that a user is informed that the requested media will be broadcasted.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the set of restrictive criteria comprises a requirement that the program only incorporate requests originating from users who have paid a fee to the media provider.

25. The method of claim 22, wherein the media is music.

26. A media server for delivering media files to a plurality of clients over a computer network, the media server comprising:

- a network connection for communicatively coupling to a plurality of clients over a network;
- a playlist memory containing a playlist, wherein the playlist defines a set of media files in a sequential order;
- a media storage memory containing a library of media files; and
- a processor coupled to the network connection, the playlist memory, and the media storage memory, wherein the processor:
 - evaluates each request using a set of restrictive criteria,
 - if the playlist including the request would satisfy the set of restrictive criteria, adds the requested media file to the playlist; and
 - transmits media files according to the playlist from the media storage memory to the plurality of clients over the computer network.

1 27. The media server of claim 26, wherein the media server broadcasts fewer than
2 a substantial number of media files within an hour of receiving the request for the
3 corresponding media file, or at a time that a client is informed that the requested media file
4 will be broadcast.

1 28. The media server of claim 26, wherein the set of restrictive criteria comprise
2 whether the playlist satisfies a set of group preferences.

3 29. The media server of claim 26, wherein the media files are sound files.

4 30. The media server of claim 26, wherein:
5 the playlist memory contains a plurality of playlists, each playlist corresponding
6 to a network media channel;
7 the processor is adapted to receive requests for media files from the plurality of
8 clients, each request being associated with a network media channel,
9 wherein the processor evaluates each request using one or more restrictive
10 criteria and, if the playlist including the requested media file would satisfy
11 the set of restrictive criteria, adds the requested media file to the playlist;
12 and
 the media server broadcasts media files sequentially to the network on each of the
 plurality of network media channels according to each corresponding
 playlist.

1 31. The media server of claim 30, wherein, for each network media channel, the
2 media server broadcasts fewer than a substantial number of media files within an hour of
3 receiving the request for the corresponding media file, or at a time that a client is informed
4 that the requested media file will be broadcast.

1 32. The media server of claim 30, wherein the set of restrictive criteria comprises
2 a set of group preferences related to each network media channel.